

AGN. NO. _____

MOTION BY SUPERVISORS DON KNABE AND ZEV YAROSLAVSKY

February 28, 2006

The Board of Supervisors has long recognized the importance of improving child safety and well-being in Los Angeles County. In 1993, the Board adopted Goal 5 of the County Strategic Plan which states: "Improve the well-being of children and families in Los Angeles County as measured by the achievements in the five outcome areas adopted by the Board: good health; economic well-being; safety and survival; social and emotional well-being; and educational/workforce readiness." The Board, however, has not established the prevention of child abuse and neglect through the support and strengthening of families as a clear, forceful organizational goal for the County. In fact, the objectives for Goal 5 regarding safety and survival focus only on processed for families that are under the jurisdiction of the Department of Children and Family Services.

On October 29, 2002, the Board of Supervisors directed the Children's Planning Council (CPC) to develop strategies to prevent child abuse and neglect. CPC

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partnered with the Commission for Children and Families (Commission) to create a Prevention Workgroup consisting of multiple County departments and community organizations, which was co-chaired by the Commission and Department of Children and Family Services. The workgroup produced a plan, "Preventing Child Maltreatment: A Comprehensive Plan for a Continuum of Family-Centered Community-Based Prevention and Intervention Services for Children, Youth and Families in Los Angeles County." (Prevention Plan) The workgroup concluded that the lack of an effective prevention strategy in Los Angeles County has significantly compromised child safety. The workgroup also found that the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is not primarily responsible for the prevention of child abuse or neglect. In fact, other departments are either likely to interact with families prior to an incident of abuse or neglect or have responsibility to deliver services that can effectively prevent child abuse or neglect by addressing the root causes such as poverty, job training, mental illness, substance abuse, lack of child care, inadequate understanding of parenting responsibilities and the importance of early child development.

A County initiative to engage communities in promoting safe and nurturing families living in safe and stable communities by leveraging County and other public and private resources with the community's people, civic, faith-based assets could yield a comprehensive prevention system. Such a system would assist families in placing their young children in quality early childhood development centers or settings, finding employment, medical care, substance abuse services, affordable housing, information about parenting and child development, and assessments of child behavior. Formal

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support systems like DCFS, Probation, Public Social Services, Community Development Commission, Mental Health and Health Services would integrate with community-based networks to promote health, emotional well-being, and safety for children and form a continuum of community and family strengthening supports that prevent child maltreatment and promote healthy and nurturing families.

While there are many County and community services and programs in place to support families, a structure is needed to coordinate County services and programs with the other public and private service providers to assure the development and implementation of effective prevention strategies. The Service Integration Branch (SIB) created within the Chief Administrative Office to integrate County health and human services, does not have the authority or adequate resources to hold departments accountable for achieving integration, especially around the issue of child abuse prevention. We believe the time has come to move more aggressively towards implementation of a prevention strategy that includes a strong community partnership structure to engage community networks, community-based agencies, County departments and other public agencies around the work in the most effective way possible. There is a genuine opportunity before us to combine the knowledge and practical know-how of communities with strong evidentiary research regarding prevention, and the resources of County departments, to go beyond just doing what we can to keep families from falling through the safety net.

This initiative should build on the efforts that the County co-sponsors with the CPC to strengthen the capacity of communities and families to act on their own behalf. The

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Community Forum (Forums) process that the County and CPC co-sponsored in 2005 through the eight Service Planning Area (SPA) Councils and the American Indian Children's (AIC) Council provided an important step in promoting community organizing around meeting the needs of families to provide safe, nurturing environments for their children. The parent action networks, teen action networks and neighborhood groups that have come together as a result of the Forums are the beginning of an important process of building healthy communities and healthy families.

WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer to add additional staff – including a project manager – within SIB to develop and implement a community-specific prevention program to strengthen the capacity of that community and its families to promote safe, stable and nurturing families and prevent child abuse and neglect. This effort shall incorporate the work of the Prevention Plan, the CPC, SPA/AIC Councils, SIB, First 5 LA, and the Mental Health Services Act stakeholder process.
2. Instruct CAO-SIB, in partnership with the Children's Planning Council and the Commission for Children and Family Services, to implement the community-specific prevention program by facilitating community meetings and workgroups of residents, community-based organizations, other public agencies and County departments to:
 - a. Develop specific outcomes to support and strengthen families and prevent child maltreatment and create a strategic list of indicators in each of the

five outcome areas in Goal 5: good health, safety and security, social and

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emotional well – being, economic well-being, and education and workforce readiness that measure the achievement of the outcomes:

- b. Analyze models used successfully in other jurisdictions – particularly models that promote community capacity-building and focus on early childhood development as key points of support and intervention, as well as models for training staff in strength based approaches to family development – and provide recommendations to the Board on a County/community plan to fund, organize, integrate, and test integrated prevention strategies in the selected community;
 - c. Develop recommendations regarding changes in County policies, resource allocation processes, and programmatic decisions as well as State and Federal legislative and regulatory requirements that are necessary to ensure the success of County/community plan to support and strengthen families and the community in promoting safe, healthy and emotionally-well children.
3. Direct CAO to hire a consultant to analyze the County's current structure for service integration among the Departments, including a review of models used successfully in other jurisdictions and provide recommendations to the Board on how to develop a county/community structure that holds County departments accountable for integrating services and blending revenues;
 4. Direct the CAO to provide funding for a \$1 million community/neighborhood mini-

grant program in the Fiscal Year (FY) 2006-07 Proposed Budget to be administered through the CPC. The funding of a mini-grant program was one of

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the key recommendations resulting from the Forums process and is viewed by the SPA/AIC Councils as a critical resource needed to continue building the capacity of communities and neighborhoods to act on their own behalf. The mini-grant program was piloted by the CPC in three SPAs through a grant of the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which yielded evidence to support that seed money is often a key and significant catalyst to the ability of a community, neighborhood, parent or teen group to organize and act in the benefit of its community and families.

5. Beginning September 2006, direct the CAO to provide quarterly status reports to the Board for the next 12 months on the accomplishments of this effort, and provide recommendations for extending the County/Community prevention initiative to additional communities as part of the FY 2007-08 Proposed Budget.

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